

Leveraging actionable data to increase student retention

Using Anthology® Retention Coaching, Wayland Baptist University not only improved student retention, but collected data they can build on in the future.



Wayland Baptist University (WBU) is a private Baptist university based in Plainview, Texas. The university has approximately 5,000 enrolled students, three quarters of whom are undergraduates. In addition to its main campus in Plainview, WBU has multiple satellite campuses across six states, American Samoa, and Kenya, as well as a virtual campus, WBUonline.

INSTITUTION TYPE:
FOUR-YEAR PRIVATE

LOCATION:
PLAINVIEW, TEXAS

ORGANIZATION SIZE:
5,000

ANTHOLOGY PRODUCTS:
|| Anthology Retention Coaching

Anthology's retention program provides our online students with the proactive support they need, when they need it. I appreciate that the Anthology coaches quickly follow up with students as soon as they show up as a risk, and when necessary they put these at-risk students in contact with university resources, such as our advising team. I am very pleased with the retention gain that this program has produced.



Patricia M. Ritschel-Trifilo, Ph.D.
Director of WBUonline, Wayland Baptist University



The Challenge

Harnessing data-driven insights to maximize student retention and success

Some 58% of institutions rank student retention as higher education's most critical issue. That's no surprise, as greater student retention leads to better student graduation rates and success in the job market. With the success of their students in mind, WBU officials made the forward-thinking decision to employ a proactive strategy to intervene with students before they decide to stop out and provide them with resources and support to help them continue toward graduation.

WBU relies on various Anthology solutions, including Blackboard® Learn as its teaching and learning platform, predictive data for identifying at-risk students, and Enrollment Services for a streamlined enrollment process. When it came to developing and deploying a plan to maximize student success, the university turned to Anthology for its expertise and experience with data-driven student retention in higher education.

A program that reaches at-risk students before it's too late

WBU chose Anthology® Retention Coaching to deliver a program aimed at improving student retention by proactively contacting students as soon as they show up as at risk of failing their academic course. The campaign began in November 2019 and continued running through Winter 2021 to measure term-to-term and year-over-year results. The goals for the program, Retention Coaching Powered by Predictive Data, were threefold:

1. Develop a scalable proactive outreach program that increases term-to-term retention of at-risk students by six to eight percentage points
2. Collect reliable data on WBU's current retention rates to inform future student success efforts
3. Gather qualitative information to better understand how students decide to return to WBU, take a term off, or withdraw

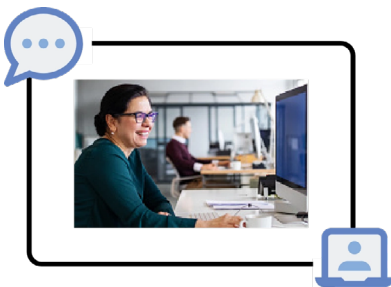
To measure effectiveness, the Anthology and WBU teams would compare term-to-term and year-to-year persistence of a coached group of students with a control group of students who would not see any intervention. The coached and control groups were balanced on variables that predicted student persistence, such as campus location, degree level, credits earned, academic program, and start date.

To account for the fact that high-risk students require a different level of support than low-risk students, Anthology delivers unique outreach strategies based on the student level of risk of stopping out. High-risk students receive more outreach via multiple channels (phone, text, email) while outreach to low-risk students includes fewer touches. This allows for a strategic, individualized approach to contacting students, rather than blanketing students of different risk groups with the same message using the same channel.

With student risk scores changing daily, the Anthology team refreshes their outreach list regularly using algorithms within Blackboard Data. The algorithm uses data points within WBU's student information system, combined with daily updates from the Blackboard Learn learning management system, to flag at-risk students. These indicators include but are not limited to cumulative GPA, class GPA, attendance, length of login, last login, previous term GPA, registration for next term, and financial aid documents.

A holistic coaching approach

Anthology's coaching model is grounded in a structured framework that enables coaches and students to have a clear assessment of student risk factors across multiple focus areas that is not limited to academics alone. After all, students today often have many commitments outside of academics: employment, family, and more. Therefore, Anthology's coaching methodology focuses on the whole student, not just academic concerns. Once the student has identified their core risk factor, the coach has various methods to help them address it, ranging from student-facing coaching tools, providing recommendations, or referrals to campus resources.





Program Results

First term

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Results

The first-term results showed that students in the coached group registered for the Spring 2020 semester at a rate seven percentage points higher than that of students in the control group. The first-term results also generated reliable data about WBU's current retention rates, as well as rich qualitative information from students' conversations with Anthology Retention Coaches about their decision-making process.



Epilogue

Anthology and WBU successfully harnessed data-driven insights to deliver a proactive outreach campaign to students at risk of stopping out of college. The first-term program has resulted in a higher term-to-term retention compared with a control population and provided WBU with valuable quantitative and qualitative data to help drive future student success efforts.

Products highlighted in this success story:

|| Anthology **Retention Coaching**

Learn more at anthology.com



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